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ABSTRACT

The Department of Education and Employment is responsible for the system of education and training in England, including careers information, education, and guidance. After the age of 16, when education is no longer compulsory, young people have a variety of choices. Training is available from private and public sector providers. Career information for young people is discharged through 66 local career services, which are organizationally independent of the education system. Guidance for adults is provided on a local level by a variety of organizations. Some employers provide advisory services, and private providers meet the needs of fee-paying clients. The main current policy issues related to career development services in England fall under the following topics: structures; quality assurance; funding; social exclusion; staff training, development, and qualifications; technology; data; and branding. The key issues which may affect public policy on career development in the future concern: trends in the labor market and how they may increase demand for career development; increase in the labor market of women, minorities, and people with disabilities; increased international mobility of labor; more accessible technology leading to more electronic interactions; and changes in public expenditure for services. (JDM)

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By

Marcus Bell

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19. UNITED KINGDOM COUNTRY PAPER

Marcus Bell, Department of Education and Employment

Context

The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) is responsible for the system of education and training in England, including careers information, education and guidance (CIEG) and for a limited number of U.K.-wide issues. The Department was created by the merger of the former Employment Department and Department for Education in July 1995. The Secretary of State for Education and Employment is a minister in Her Majesty's government. With the help of other ministers, he is responsible to Parliament for developing and administering policies on education, training and employment.

The secretaries of state for Wales and Northern Ireland are also ministers who exercise broadly similar responsibilities in their respective countries (although the impending creation of new assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will change existing constitutional arrangements significantly). The Scottish Office Education and Industry Department (SOEID) is the government department responsible for policy on education and training in Scotland.

The government helps set the framework for the education and training system, and works in partnership with other central and local bodies to implement those policies. It also provides funds for many of the public bodies and community and voluntary organizations involved in education and training.

While the education and training systems of England, Wales and Northern Ireland are broadly similar, the education system in Scotland has always been a completely separate system with its own laws and practices. Differences in education and training across Britain are particularly marked in the school systems. At the higher education level and for training, this is less true.

Historically, education and training institutions have enjoyed a high degree of autonomy. State-funded schools are funded through local and central government and are responsible for managing a large proportion of their budgets and for hiring staff. In the higher education sector, universities are largely self-governing.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children obtain education between their fifth and 16th birthdays. Most children in this age group

attend a school, though a small minority are educated by private tuition, often at home. In Northern Ireland, compulsory schooling begins at age 4.

After the age of 16, when education is no longer compulsory, young people have a variety of choices. Some 70 percent stay in education, either at school (usually known as sixth-form education) or at further education (FE) colleges. Others go into work, with the remainder being guaranteed a place on the government's training programs for young people. Overall, some 86 percent of 16 year olds are involved in some form of education or training beyond the age of 16.

Training in Britain is available from a wide range of private and public sector providers. Employers decide what investment to make in skills, and individuals are encouraged to take the initiative to develop their skills in a culture of lifelong learning. Competence-based qualifications (National Vocational Qualifications-NVQs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; Scottish Vocational Qualifications-SVQs in Scotland) certify an individual's ability to meet the skills standards required at work. The government's main role is to provide guidance and to fund an institutional framework in which training decisions can be taken. It also funds work-related training, especially for young people, unemployed people and people with disabilities or special needs.

Other than the department and educational institutions themselves, the main public bodies concerned with education and training in England are:

- **Local education authorities** (LEAs) are responsible for administering schools and the local adult education service. LEAs are a component of local authorities, democratically elected organizations whose responsibilities include a wide variety of local services other than education.

- **Training and enterprise councils** (TECs) are local agencies with substantial business participation. Their main responsibilities are in the field of vocational training, although many also play an important role locally in economic development and regeneration.

- **Careers services** organizations mainly provide CIEG for young people under contract to the Department for Education and Employment. Most careers services are in the private sector. Besides their core business meeting the needs of young people, many of the relevant organizations also provide a service to adults.

The structures for delivering, managing and administering education and training to those beyond the age of 16 are currently the subject of a formal review by the government, which will be completed by the summer of 1999.

The main ages of transfer within the English education system are:

- 5, when compulsory education begins (though most children below the age of 5 are engaged in some form of early years provision);
- 11, when children transfer from primary to secondary schools; and
- 16, when education is no longer compulsory and young people must choose between:
  - continuing their studies at school,
  - continuing their studies at either a sixth form college or further education college,
  - moving on to a government-supported vocational training program or
  - taking a job which may or may not include training leading to a qualification.

In broad terms, the first two options are regarded as "academic" routes and the second two as "vocational" routes.

Although 41 percent of young people enter higher education at about the age of 18, a majority of participants in university in the United Kingdom are now 21 or older.

The ages of transfer sketched out above do not apply universally, as some parts of England retain a compulsory school system with three, rather than two tiers.

Admissions to schools in England are determined primarily by domicile, though some parts of the country retain selection by examination as a means of determining entry to secondary schools. Entry to colleges and universities is often, though not always, determined by performance in public examinations and in interviews.

Current Provision

For Young People

The Secretary of State, the schools and colleges all have legal duties to ensure that appropriate careers education and guidance are provided to young people.

Careers education, information and guidance services are provided free of charge to people undergoing education at school, in sixth-form colleges or further education, and to those who have recently left.

CIEG services for young people are concentrated in the years leading up to and immediately following the 16th birthday. Following legislation in 1997, secondary schools in England are now required to provide a coherent CIEG program for young people from the age of 14. Guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority advises schools on the aims and learning objectives of CIEG programs but there is no national curriculum for careers work as there is for academic subjects. An increasing number of schools, though still a minority, are using their discretion to provide some CIEG-related activities for pupils below the age of 14. All schools and colleges offer some CIEG services to students 16 and older who are in post-compulsory education.

The aims of careers education and guidance are to enable people to:

- understand themselves and develop their capabilities;
- investigate careers and opportunities; and
- implement their career plans.

In practice, careers education and careers guidance are interwoven. Schools and careers services work collaboratively, with schools taking the lead on the careers education program and the careers service leading to guidance at key decision points.

Careers education programs should enable young people to develop their knowledge, understanding and experience of opportunities in education, training and employment. Careers education should also enable young people to develop skills to manage their career throughout their working life and to support lifelong learning. These skills are primarily around decision making, action planning, negotiating and self-presentation.

Careers education, information and guidance services for young people encompass:

- enabling people to make appropriate educational and occupational choices at key transition points, based on relevant information about learning opportunities, jobs and the labour market;
- encouraging people to achieve relevant skills and qualifications at the highest level at which they are capable;
- guiding individuals in using their skills and qualifications effectively in their chosen occupational area; and
- facilitating the matching of individuals with particular opportunities in which they can develop their skills and potential.

The secretary of state's duty to provide careers information, education and guidance for young people is, in practice, discharged through a series of contracts with 66 local careers services. Most careers services are separate legal entities with boards of directors. Board members represent a variety of interests in the locality.

The United Kingdom is unusual in providing an additional careers guidance service for young people which is organizationally independent of the education system. The origins of this service lie in the local job placement bureaus which were set up in the major cities beginning around 1920. Over the years, such services spread gradually until most of the country was covered. The focus of the service was job placement until well into the 1960s. The new comprehensive schools established at about this time began to take increasing interest in careers education as a way of supporting their much wider range of students (in terms of both ability and social circumstances).

In recent years, however, the competition between schools and colleges for students in the post-compulsory phase has been seen by government to require a freely available, independent and impartial guidance service to advise students about their options following year 11. These career services are directly funded by central government. Their contracts require them to work closely with schools, colleges and other relevant organizations in the interests of their student clients.

Each careers service provides a vocational information, guidance and placing service which:

- helps young people reach well-informed, objective and realistic decisions about their employment, education and training;
- helps those leaving school or college, and those young people who leave training or are unemployed, to find suitable employment, education or training;
- ensures that pupils, students and staff at schools and colleges are aware of the demands that working life makes on people, and of the opportunities it offers them; and
- promotes equal opportunities.

Each careers service must provide its clients with:

- comprehensive and impartial careers information;
- advice and guidance when making careers decisions; and
- a service to refer and place clients into education, training and employment.

For Unemployed People

The Employment Service (ES), an agency of central government with a comprehensive network of local offices ("job centres"), is responsible for advising unemployed people about returning to the labour market and for placing them in suitable jobs.

Historically, ES has had a strong focus on facilitating the return to work of unemployed people as rapidly as possible, rather than on career development per se. More recently, however, the agency has been developing more comprehensive advice and support services for its clients. These are strongly associated with the current government's welfare to work programs, including the New Deal initiatives targeted at particular groups such as those 18 to 24 years old, lone parents and those with a disability.

A particular feature of the New Deal programs is the Gateway, an intensive period of advice and support offered to ES clients at the beginning of their entry to the relevant initiative. Advice and support in the Gateway are provided by a personal adviser, who needs to be qualified to a suitable level in the provision of careers guidance.

For Adults

Information, advice and guidance for adults have historically been provided on a local level by a very wide variety of organizations. The nature of the organizations involved varies greatly depending on the locality, but they typically include the local careers service, the Training and Enterprise Council, the local authority and a broad range of local and national community and voluntary organizations. Some employers provide an advisory service for their employees, and a variety of private providers meet the needs of fee-paying clients.

Adult guidance services have traditionally been funded from a wide variety of sources. Many receive the bulk of their funding from insecure and time-limited sources such as the European Union and local "all-service" regeneration projects. Other adult services are funded at marginal cost on the back of other activities, particularly the statutory provision of CIEG to young people.

On January 1, 1999, the government announced about £50 million of funding over three years for the development of local information, advice and guidance (IAG) services for adults. This was the first time national program funding had been made available for adult IAG services in England. The main impetus behind the initiative is the government policy to encourage all adults to become learners throughout life. The number of adult learners — and hence the market for information, advice and guidance — is expected to increase significantly over the next few years.

Under this initiative, services will be developed on a local level from the summer of 1999. The main features of the policy are:

- Local services will be free of charge at the point of entry.

- The priority for public funding is the provision of a basic information and advice service. Other services may be provided, but they may need to be offered on a fee-paying basis.

- New services will be built on the basis of what already exists.

- Delivery will be through partnerships, drawing together relevant organizations on a local level to deliver, as far as possible, a seamless service from the point of view of the customer.

- Services will be quality assured through a national accreditation body established with support from the government.

- Effective information and referral links will need to be developed between local partnerships providing information, advice and guidance and other relevant organizations.

A very successful national learning and careers telephone helpline called Learning Direct was established in 1998. Learning Direct received and dealt with around half a million calls in its first year of operation. The development of local IAG partnerships will provide an important complementary service.

Learning Direct will come under the operational umbrella of the new University for Industry (Ufl). The Ufl is a new public–private organization with a mission to promote lifelong learning through the most advanced technologies. Ufl will operate in a variety of markets, but will also provide information, advice and support to learners through a national network of learning centres that it intends to set up.

Current Policy Issues

The main current policy issues related to career development services in England are arranged below under nine headings, with, in some cases, a brief explanation.

Structures

- What are the most appropriate institutional arrangements for the delivery of career development services to young people and to adults?

  This is an issue because of the review of the arrangements for the funding and organization of *all* education and training announced by the government for those over the age of 16.

- What is the best way of organizing the relationships between the various organizations concerned with career development, both at the national and local level?

  Different agencies concerned with related subjects do not always work well with each other at the local level. In addition, new policies have meant the creation of new institutions (e.g., the University for Industry) which will require new relationships to be forged on a local level.

Quality and Quality Assurance

- What is the best way of ensuring that publicly funded career development services provide a service of high quality?

  Because central government funding for adult services is so recent, new quality assurance arrangements are being developed and put in place. There is an issue about the extent to which those arrangements should apply to agencies which are already subject to other internal and external controls.

Funding

- To what extent should career development services for adults be supported by the taxpayer/employers/the individual?

  The initiative announced on January 1, 1999 provides for the establishment, with the support of public funding, of a basic information and advice service across England. Many local agencies may wish to offer a more comprehensive service to local people, though it is likely to be necessary in the short term to charge a fee for these or to secure alternative sources of funding. There is, nevertheless, an issue about the extent to which, in the medium term, public funding should be provided to support a more comprehensive service, perhaps for certain target groups.

Social Exclusion

- How should career development services address the needs of the most socially disadvantaged?

  Action was recently taken to refocus the work of the careers services on the needs of the most socially disadvantaged young people. But issues remain about the best way to work together with other support services for young people, to help those who are disaffected and excluded.

  For adults, effective career development services can have a particularly powerful role in "re-engaging" disadvantaged adults, acting as the first rung of a ladder back into learning or into the labour market. For such action to be effective, however, it often needs to be delivered through "outreach" — close to where people live and in an informal setting,

rather than in an educational institution. Much effective outreach is conducted by small-scale community and voluntary organizations, which are closer to the people they serve and have more credibility with them than any public agency.

Staff Training, Development and Qualifications

- What qualifications should be expected of staff providing information, advice and guidance?
- What, if anything, should government do to support providers in the development of their own staff?
- Do careers services and providers of information, advice and guidance attract staff of the right calibre?

Technology

- How can career development providers best make use of new technology in the delivery of services?

  The U.K. government has adopted a target that all government business should be deliverable electronically by 2008. Information and communications technology evidently offers exciting possibilities to career development providers for new and innovative kinds of delivery.

Data

- How can career development providers most effectively share data about learning and work opportunities?

  Providing effective advice to clients about learning, work and the relationship between the two depends on good quality information about the opportunities available. A national learning opportunities database is being developed in England, and it is hoped that all providers will have access to this.

Branding

- How should adult IAG services be branded so their role and purpose is clear to the public?

  Most people in England do not know what "career development" or "information, advice and guidance" services are. The vocabulary used by practitioners obscures what they do. There is, consequently, a need for a clear brand identity for the service, perhaps accompanied by suitable publicity to ensure that its role and purpose are clear.

Key Issues for the Future

A short list of the key issues which may affect public policy on career development over the next 10 years might include the following:

- Acceleration of any of the current trends in the labour market tends to increase demand for career development, particularly an increase in the proportion of short-term or otherwise insecure employment.
- There will be increased penetration of the labour market — and at more senior levels — by historically underrepresented groups including women, ethnic minorities and those with a disability.
- Increased international mobility of labour may create a need for national career development services to take a wider international perspective about the opportunities available to their clients.
- Cheaper, more accessible and faster technology leads to increased levels of electronic interaction of every kind.
- Employer expectations will change with regards to the desirable qualities of employees and, in particular, shift away from emphasis on paper qualifications or vocational skills toward "generic" skills and competencies.
- More effective school education may lead to higher levels of attainment and higher expectations among school leavers.
- Demographic change could lead to, for example an increase in the number of retired people interested in participating in learning and seeking guidance about opportunities from local services.
- A significant change (positive or negative) in the public expenditure climate could lead to a reduction (or increase) in the public resources available to support career development services.